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LEP GUIDANCE for SPRING 2004 MontCAS ADMINISTRATION

The purpose of this communication is to address recent changes in the participation of limited English proficient students in statewide assessments announced recently by the U.S. Department of Education.

Participation for limited English proficient (LEP) students in the Iowa Tests, NRT - MontCAS Phase 1 and the criterion-referenced tests, CRT- MontCAS Phase 2, differs somewhat so the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) is providing the following clarification. For the Iowa Tests, the Montana Board of Public Education rule that states that LEP students who have received fewer than three years of instruction in English may be waived from participation provided that they are given an alternate assessment prevails. The Alternate Assessment Scales for the Iowa Tests is appropriate for this use in some instances. In other cases, a test of English language proficiency such as the Woodcock Munoz or the IPT may be more appropriate.

Under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), all LEP students must participate in the statewide assessment that the state is using to meet the requirements of NCLB for determining Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). In Montana this is the CRT-MontCAS Phase 2. Some states provide alternate tests in the native language but Montana does not; additionally, the alternate assessment developed for the CRT - MontCAS Phase 2 is exclusively for students with significant cognitive disabilities and is based on alternate achievement standards. OPI expects that the range of accommodations available in the regular CRT - MontCAS Phase 2 will allow most LEP students to fully participate in the regular assessment.

The February 23, 2004, federal guidance regarding participation of limited English proficient students in statewide assessments states: For the current school year, LEP students who are enrolled for the first time in a U.S. school must participate in the math portion of the state assessment used for NCLB purposes, with accommodations as necessary, and must participate in either the reading assessment, with accommodations as necessary, or an English language proficiency assessment, which in Montana would be either the Woodcock Munoz, or the IPT. For both the math and reading assessments, these students will be (and must be) counted as participants toward meeting the required 95 percent participation rate, but neither the math nor the reading scores are required to be included in AYP determinations.

Since the federal guidance came too late to reflect this change in the answer documents for the CRT - MontCAS Phase 2 - to be given March 29-April 16, 2004, please observe the following instructions to provide an accurate recording of these students' status. Code the students (for whom this is the first year in a United States school) as not attending the full academic year in both the school and the district (even if the student has attended from the October count date to the beginning of the testing window). The code is NSAY and NDAY in Box N, on page two of the student response booklet. If these students take an English language proficiency test instead of the CRT reading test, please submit a copy of their answer document on the English language proficiency test to Judy Snow, State Assessment Director, OPI. Additionally, on the CRT reading test answer document, bubble in one answer for the student, so that participation on the reading test will be reflected in the school and district report. It is anticipated that this will affect VERY few Montana schools since there are not many immigrant students who are in their first year in a United States school at grades 4, 8 and 10.

For this year, LEP students for whom this is not the first year in a United States school must participate in the CRT - MontCAS Phase 2, with or without appropriate accommodations. This guidance differs from the information provided on page five of the CRT - MontCAS Phase 2 Test Coordinators' Manual. The March JUMP newsletter references the

participation of LEP students in MontCAS Phase 1 and Phase 2. The U.S. Department of Education plans to provide regulations regarding this change and possible further changes in states' AYP calculations regarding the LEP subgroup in the near future. If you have any questions, contact Lynn Hinch by telephone, 444-3482 or by e-mail, lhinch@state.mt.us.